

# Recognition for Omani Honey in London



Aliya Al Sajwani



Aliya Mohammed Ali Al Sajwani, a PhD student at Sultan Qaboos University, won the largest number of prizes in the National Honey Show held in London for the Omani honey she exhibited. The prizes included the National Cup, the gold medal, a financial reward, and a number of certificates. Aliya was the only participant who won a prize for each type of honey she showcased, which were Sumur (Acacia) honey (from Al-Rutaq State), Sidr (Ziziphus) honey (from Al-Mahdha State), and the mixed honey, or the multifloral honey (from Al-Rustaq State). The first type of honey won the first prize, while the second and third types won the third prize each.

Before presenting Omani honey in the National Honey Show, Aliya had examined the samples in the Research Laboratory in the Department of Biology of the College of Science, where she is doing her PhD in the biochemistry of honey and pollen. When the laboratory tests showed that the quality and properties of Omani honey match the standards required for participating in the National Honey Show, she decided to take part in the competition.

Aliya said that Omani honey features properties that are identical to international quality specifications in terms of both the physical characteristics (color, smell and taste) and chemical properties (water, sugar, mineral, and enzymatic content). "It is harvested in the summer and winter seasons. The common summer floral sources for the honeybees are *Acacia tortilis* (Sumur), *Prosopis* sp. (Ghafa), *Citrus* sp., and *Maerua crassifolia* (Sarah). In the winter, the chief nectar and pollen sources for honeybees are *Ziziphus spina-christi* (Sidr) and *Prosopis* sp. In addition, there are some other plants that grow in different places and times which are considered to be good sources of honeybees".

The National Honey Show is organized by the National Honey Show Limited. It has been held annually since 1923 in London. This year it was organized at St. George College in Weybridge, South London. The show is one of the oldest and well-known specialized exhibitions that offers various activities and events for beekeepers and researchers in the field of bees and honey and their products. The events include scientific lectures given by specialists from various countries around the world, presenting the latest

scientific studies that serve apiaries and their products. In addition, there are educational and training workshops conducted by specialists about the latest methods of looking after apiaries and increasing their production, methods of identifying the quality of honey, and ways of exploiting honey in everyday life in the food and cosmetics industries.

Moreover, the National Honey Show events include competitions in honey types, and honeybee products. These competitions are considered to be the most important event of the show. The competing honeys and bee products are displayed in accordance with conditions and criteria set in advance by the National Honey Show Board, which also specifies prizes for each competing category. This year, there were 1311 competing bee products that were of 270 various types. These included liquid honey, natural crystallized honey, creamed honey, comb honey, wax forms, bee decorations, cakes and biscuits made with honey, and photographs of bees' activities. In addition, the competition included bee products and drawings produced by children to encourage them to pursue a beekeeping career. Countries other than UK are allowed to showcase only some types of honey and wax. This is to avoid exposing the British bees' environment to extraneous diseases.

Aliya Al Sajwani, exhibited liquid Omani honey that was evaluated against specifications for color, smell, taste, purity, moisture level, electrical conductivity, etc. In addition, the packaging jars were also evaluated in terms of shape, size, weight, and type. In terms of type, the requirements were that the jars be of transparent glass, free from air bubbles and scratches, and firmly sealed with scratch-free metal lids.

The National Honey Show lasted for three days. Before the opening day, a board of experienced specialists assessed the competing products so that each participant could know the results right on the first day of the show. This was done by displaying the products along with stars of four colors that indicated the results. There were red, blue, green, and yellow stars that stood for the first, second, third, and fourth prizes respectively. The products were also evaluated on the level of importance in terms of being much in demanded or in demanded.

Specialists from across Britain and some other Western countries and South American countries participated in the show, but Oman was the only Arab country taking part. In fact, no Arab or Islamic country had participated in the show for 80 years. The show exhibited a book about the visit of a group of British beekeepers to the Sultanate in 2010 under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture. The book, which was admired by the show visitors, included pictures and information about the British beekeepers' visits to various apiaries in the Omani States.

Omani honey was admired by the National Honey Show Board, participants, and visitors for its taste, distinctive smell, viscosity, and cohesion. The Board encouraged the doctoral student Aliya Sajwani to always participate effectively in this vital activity. It also thanked Oman for its current and previous contribution. The previous contribution was in 2011 through a delegation from the Royal Court Affairs, Department of Apiaries. It also won two prizes for the two types of Acacia honey it showcased.

Aliya is grateful to SQU administration, the Dean of College of Science and her research team for their encouragement and support to facilitate her attendance in the London honey show.